Mayamma-
the divine mother

-Santhipriya

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Born in the year 1945 in Tamilnadu, and basically a Printing Technologist, I served in various Central Govt organizations such as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) under the then Ministry of Scientific affairs, Govt of India; Bank Note Press, Ministry of Finance, Dept of Economic Affairs, Govt of India, Dewas, engaged in the printing of Bank Notes and Currencies, before finally superannuated in the capacity of a senior official in the year 2005. After retirement I worked in the capacity of a Consultant in Security Printing; obtained a Patent on new technique for numbering of currencies and participated in an international conference in Hongkong as a special invitee to present a paper on counterfeiting menace.

Under the Pen name 'SANTHIPRIYA', I am pursuing the art of writing; have written over 1500 spiritual articles in English and Tamil covering several Temples, Mahans and other historical stories connected to spiritual world and published them in my own website https://pages.santhipriya.com/.

Have translated over 2500 pages of english articles into Tamil for various websites. Few of the voluminous books written by me have been published by few of the groups engaged in spreading spiritual knowledge and few more are likely to be published soon. To help the students in printing, I have published many articles and Question and Answers in my website https://printing.santhipriya.com/.

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India is a highly spiritual land, which houses several Rishis, Mendicants, Saints and Sages, medieval Bhakti poet-saints, continuing to modern-day Spiritual masters, both male and female; few to mention in them were Kanchi Paramacharya, Ramana Maharishi, Shirdi Sai Baba, Sheshadri Swamigal, Sarada Devi, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Pondi maa, Arabindo, Karaikkaal Ammaiyaar, Vadalur Vallalaar, Anandamayi Maa, Sivamma Thayee and host of others. Many were highly revered till date for their simple living, profound wisdom, and the performance of miracles or wonders at various periods of time for the benefit of mankind as well as to those who had unconditionally surrendered to them, when the pleas were genuine and reasonable.

For several years I yearned to write on female Avadhoot after I visited the ashram of Maa Ananda Mayi in Haridwar few years before (2003) I retired from my service. The entire samadhi sthal was in serene atmosphere, through its emphasis on silence, contemplation; one can find absolute peace prevailing in its meditation hall, courtyards and surrounding areas inside the ashram. The overall vibe was peaceful, serene, and completely relaxes the mind. In the room where Maa Ananda Mayi lived, display of her photos, articles and materials including the cot and chairs used by her were seen in a tranquil atmosphere. Earlier I had heard of few divine souls like

Pondicherry Mother, Sarada Devi, Mayamma and Sivamma Thayee whose life style were stated to be simpler and austere, but, I had no opportunity to meet them in my life time .

The greatest Sidha Purushas never revealed who they were and left it to the devotees to experience themselves if they were really blessed. This is perhaps the reason why the life and birth of Shirdi Saibaba, the greatest amongst the siddha purushas remain still spined in mystery. Similar is the case of the greatest soul in the recent history, Sidha Purushi Mayamma whose parental details are still deeply debated.

Prior to 2018, I attempted to write about the less publicized divine mother Mayamma who is revered and worshiped as Goddess Parasakthi and Goddess Kanyakumari Amman by her devotees in south. Several years back, I contacted some one in the Samathi temple in Salem to get details on Mayamma, but they were not inclined to reveal more details as though she was privy to them. Later sometime while conversing with one of my friends pursuing spiritual activities, she gave me few hints on the divine mother Mayamma. She said Mayamma was saintly woman who chose to live a simple and ascetic life. It therefore again kindled my interest to write on the divine mother Mayamma.

Who is Mayamma? Mayamma was a saintly, silent figure who lived near the seashore in Kanyakumari. Neither her birth details nor her past is known to any; her origins

shouldered in mystery, though some believe she may be Goddess Parasakti manifested in Kamakya temple in Assam and came to Kanyakumari in the form of Mayamma. Some of the spiritual masters opine that divine Mayamma may have been one of the greatest Avadhoots in her previous births; after completing ordained penance in places like Kasi, Tibet and Nepal, she may have come to Kanyakumari to profess and practise unorthodox type of Sadhna (spiritual practices) to attain liberation in her last birth. The general opinion however has been that the silent and mysterious Saint or Avadhoot, whatever you may call her, may have arrived in Kanyakumari sometime during 1920s.

The saint from Kanyakumari lived without concern for worldly possessions or social norms when she was first spotted wandering in the sea bed of Kanyakumari Sea. Scantily dressed in torn tattered rags, she appeared impoverished, uncouth and wandered on the sand bed of Kanyakumari beech surrounded by several dogs; whether it was day time or in the night, she was seen resting or sleeping on sand bed. She had not begged for food from any one and even when some one offered some food, she ate only few qnty after sharing the same with the dogs which followed her or shared them with other poor around her; if food was unavailable for many days, she remained uncared for food ; she had not shown any interest for food, a sort of fasting which never fatigued her in any manner. Her ability to go without food for days without fatigue suggests a profound spiritual or yogic state, where the mind is said to triumph over the body's demands.

She had no permanent shelter and therefore slept anywhere she wished- whether it was open spaces on road sides, sand bed of seashore or under the trees. The spiritual masters say that the pack of dogs always stayed around those spiritual masters who were in the lineage of Lord Kala Bhairava or Lord Dattathreya as pack of dogs always accompanied Lord Kala Bhairava or Lord Dattathreya.

People have seen Mayamma sitting over the rocks of the seashore or even rocks inside the sea. Suddenly she would jump into the ocean, go deep, collect sea moss, filth and waste, bring them to the seashore, pile them up on sand bed, lit fire to them and sat before it for hours. It was strange sight to see her collecting sea moss and debris and lit fire with bare hands without use of match sticks, but in hindu tradition, Sidha Purush in penance lit fire and performed yagna for some cause. Mayamma perhaps had engaged in one such act for for reasons only known to her.

Can the appearance of a divine incarnate be so ugly and disgusting? A story circulated about her uncouth appearance states that she was initially a beautiful woman when landed in Kanyakumari and wandered freely by the side of seashore. However, due to the menace of rogues who stalked her with ulterior motives, one day in their full purview she suddenly appeared as an uncouth, ugly woman. Some may argue whether it is possible to change the basic appearance in a matter of seconds?

Lord Dattathreya deliberately appeared as drunkard beggar, walking biting pieces of mutton or holding wine

bottles in hand etc, and if some one went near him, he would spat and abuse them in filthy language. But those who had understood him well, if still followed him wherever he went unmindful of his outwardly false act, and sought his blessings, in wink of an eye, the Lord will appear before them in his true form. Similar could have been enacted by Mayamma when she changed her outwardly appearance as uncouth, unclean beggar to hoodwink the stalkers, while few of her true devotees have seen her in the true form of Goddess Kanyakumari and Goddess Parasakthi who continued to offer worship to her unmindful of her uncouth appearance.

Initially, those who saw the uncouth lady wandering along the seashore believed her to be a beggar. Even if she happened to accidentally walk close to some one, they would keep a distance away from her because of her dirty look, unaware that she was one of the greatest Avadhoot and a divine incarnate. There is a common belief that she was first spotted in Kanyakumari by the fishermen who ventured into the sea.

Her fame spread among the residents of Kanyakumari by 1925 through an incident. One day, one of the tourist buses ran over a dog and sped away. The dog lay lifeless, blood splashed all over the place; intestine gushed out from her (dog) body; the gruesome scene horrified everyone. Therefore, people stayed away from looking at the horrifying scene which left all around a stinking, nauseating smell, unable to bear. Mayamma, who happened pass through that road, walked calmly up to the dog, showed no

emotion, picked her up, held her (dog) over her (Mayamma) lap, pushed the intestine inside her body, pulled the skin tightly, picked up few wooden sticks (thinner than the thickness of match sticks) from the road side and pushed them into the skin as if she was stitching a torn cloth. Once done, she put mud paste over the treated areas, and walked away leaving the dog uncared by the side of the road.

What a wonder, next morning to everyone's shock and surprise, the dog slowly came to her senses, opened the eyes, stood up in a few minutes and ran away as if nothing had happened the previous day. Even the scar was not visible from where the intestine gushed out after the accident. How did it happen was the sole question that reverberated in the minds of curious onlookers. This incident made everyone realize that Mayamma was not an ordinary soul and possessed extraordinary divine power.

Afterwards, people began to show her respect and continued to keep an attentive eye on her activities. Numerous individuals have observed her frequent visits to the seaside, entering the sea, disappearing, and returning several hours later. All those strengthened the feeling that she was sure to be divine incarnate and not an ordinary soul. They came forward and offered her some shelter to stay, but Mayamma turned down their offers and instead opted to sleep outside Lord Vinayaga's temple on a busy street. It left an impression in the minds of the folks that Mayamma preferred to spend most of her time over the ocean rather than staying on land.

Mayamma would suddenly walk into some restaurant or eatery and grab some food, or seek food from the proprietor, gather everything and give it to people nearby, or feed the dogs that followed her. Once Mayamma lifted some eatable from a shop, the sales at the stores from where she bought food would skyrocket. This prompted every store owner to eagerly wait for Mayamma's visit to their store. After feeding the dogs, she would occasionally feed the food to the people nearby. While some people would refuse food offered directly into their mouths unless she had washed her hands after feeding the dogs, others rushed to accept it since they considered the food to be sacred. However, Mayamma never continued this practice on day-to-day basis, her act was spontaneous, and on rare occasions.

The majority of the people who interacted with Mayamma were fishermen who ventured into the sea because the Kanyakumari Sea was their only source of support to their living. While fishing, fishermen used to encounter erratic turbulence, rip tides, and storms that caught them off guard. The fishermen had to swim to the shore to save themselves when the sea turbulences threw them from their boats into the water. Innumerous times, Mayamma had saved several exhausted fishermen from drowning, unable to swim against a fierce wind. She will appear from somewhere and pull them to safety. Only later when the fishermen had been dragged to safety along with their boats, they will come to know that Mayamma did that miracle.

Many fishermen had frequently observed Mayamma swimming effortlessly in the middle of the ocean, 20 to 30 Kilometers away from the sand bed. Even when they offered her lift on their boats to reach the seashore, she would gently refuse, swim by their sides and then abruptly disappear into the ocean. When the terrified fishermen arrived at the shore unable to locate her, Mayamma will be sitting there laughing, waiting for their return. Such incidents reinforced the people's conviction that Mayamma was, in fact, divine and not just a regular person. With her remarkable strength and uncanny ability to navigate the treacherous waters, Mayamma became a local legend among the fishing community. Many believed that she was a guardian angel of the sea, watching over those who dared to venture into the sea in unpredictable depths.

As time went on, people slowly began to flock to her even though she mingled with everyone as if she were just one of them. People carrying problems or suffering with incurable diseases, if received the blessings of Mayamma, their long-pending problems automatically got sorted out. Mayamma never spoke and replied only by sign language, gesture or by unique sounds. If they were clever, they will understand what she said.

When Mayamma was in Kanyakumari in 1970, one Shri Rajendran became enchanted by her divinity for unknown reasons and started following her wherever she went. He wondered how unmindful of inclement weather, hot sun, rain, pitch dark in the night etc she slept over the sea bed for several days, without food or water.

On many days he had seen uncouth Mayamma, wandering there surrounded by pack of dogs and initially thought her to be a beggar. As days passed, he noticed her sharing the food with the dogs and those around her before she ate handful of food. He also observed that individuals were coming seeking blessings.

In the early stages of his life, Shri. Rajendran was deeply devoted to Vadalur Vallalaar Swamigal, who was one of the most famous Tamil saints and also one of the greatest Tamil poets of the 19th century. Initially called Ramalinga swami, the saint promoted the idea of worshiping a lit lamp's flame as the symbol of the eternal power. Shri. Rajendran encountered spiritual experience when the priest of a temple was offering an aradana (adoration with a lighted lamp before divines in the temple) with a lighted lamp. Vadalur Vallalaar Swamigal's life came to an end when he vanished into the thin air from a locked room where he entered last. Noticing it, Shri. Rajendran became a devotee of Vallalar Swamigal and took up spiritual path and got detached from family life.

While he was in service he had heard a lot about Mayamma and wanted to go there and meet her; fulfilling his wish, accidentally he got a new job in Kanyakumari and shifted there when he spotted Mayamma. Slowly he spend much of his life time staying around her and at times attempted to even serve her. Mayamma accepted his services in silence; his attachment towards her grew day by day and at one period of time he became her disciple and continued to stay with her all through the day after quitting his job.

Spending 13 years with her gave several unique experiences to Shri. Rajendran who had actually slept along with her in the sand bed; in open spaces; in dingy and dirty places; wore same dirty clothes unwashed for several days; ate whatever was available to both. He was instrumental in bringing Mayamma to Salem district of Tamilnadu where she attained Samadhi. Shri. Rajendran raised a Samadhi temple with the aid of others and stayed with her there.

When Mayamma was staying in Kanyakumari her fame spread far and wide as more and more people including intellectuals from different corners of the land reached out to Mayamma. There were spiritual masters such as Poondi Swamigal, Pollachi Koti Swamigal, Tirukovilur Gnananantha Giri Swamigal, Marunthuvaa malai Naina Swamigal, Kuttalam mouna Swamigal, Kasavanappatti Mouna Jyothi Swamigal and Yogi Sarath Kumar Swamigal etc who played key role in spreading her fame to their devotees. They also sent some of their devotees to Mayamma to take her blessings. Besides, even few ex Prime Ministers and the President of India have visited her to seek her blessings addressing her as Goddess of Kanyakumari. There is controversy on the age of Mayamma. Though it is generally believed that she must have crossed the age of 300, His holiness Poondi Mahan once expressed her age could be around 470 to 485 years.

For reasons unknown, the fame of Mayamma remained in closed circles without getting wide publicity. She was visited by persons only on hearsay and it was widely believed that Mayamma herself did not wish get publicised. She had

been revered as ambulant Goddess of Kanyakumari. Once, to everyone's dismay in Kanyakumari, Mayamma was found missing along with Shri. Rajendran. Later they found Mayamma relocated to Salem in order to pursue Jeeva Samadhi. Despite moving to Salem, Mayamma was frequently spotted on Kanyakumari's shoreline, where several experienced miracle cure from her.

One of His Holiness Gnananantha Giri Swamigal's female disciples once expressed her desire to see Goddess Parasakthi in person. Swamigal asked her right away to travel to Kanyakumari, where, if fortune favored her, she would be rewarded with a vision of Goddess Parasakthi. The woman traveled to Kanyakumari, spent many days there, visited nearly every temple, but unable to get vision of Goddess Parasakthi. Feeling let down, she went back home met His Holiness Gnananantha Giri Swamigal and expressed her disappointment. Swamigal corrected her with a smile, adding that while she had met Goddess Parasakthi who fed her by hand, she failed to realize it.

The woman was disappointed when Swamigal said so, but reconciled when she calmed down and recollected an incident which she had experienced when she walked alongside of the beach in Kanyakumari. She saw Mayamma giving some food to the dogs from a box; when Mayamma noticed the lady* she took some food from the box and tried to feed her in her* mouth; uncomfortable with the gesture she* went away refusing to accept it (* the woman who was eager to meet Parasakthi). She regretted to Swamigal that she had lost once-in-a-lifetime chance of

receiving holy mother's blessing because of her* foolish act. Swamigal told her that Mayamma was indeed Parasakthi who lived in human form.

One of the tapasvis namely Pon Kamaraj lived in Kanyakumari district. Once he had an acute problem in his thigh; big boil appeared in his thighs which could not be cured by any of the doctors. When the doctors were unable to treat the boil, they released him from the clinic after giving him a seven-day deadline for his life. However, he met Mayamma at the insistence of someone. She forced him to lie flat on the sand bed and, in spite of his loud, agonized cry, put a thin, red-hot iron rod through the boil. He became unconscious in a matter of seconds. When he eventually woke up, the boil had vanished, leaving his thigh free of pain and visible scars. Instead of pursuing a career in law, Mayamma sent him to Yogi Ram Surat Kumar in Thiruvannamalai to receive spiritual instruction which provides inner strength and tranquility. There he administered the affairs of a trust in the ashram of Yogi Ram Surat Kumar another spiritual guru from Thiruvannamalai. Pon Kamaraj in one of the devotees who had received Mayamma's actual vision as Goddess Parasakthi.

One Shri Sundaram was a practicing attorney in Supreme Court. He used to attend Mayamma Guru Pooja in Salem each year without fail. Every year, he would arrive in Salem a day prior to the start of the Guru Pooja and spend the following day meditating in the Mayamma temple. During meditation, he used to receive guidance from Mayamma by way of mystic gestures and sounds that were only audible

to him. Shri Sundaram acknowledged that he had previously lived a life of shame and after giving himself over to Mayamma, life had completely changed to that of peace.

Another individual, Shri Sabarinathan too experienced a similar situation. Sabarinathan lived a miserable life for a number of years, but as soon as he started going to Mayamma's Samadhi temple, Mayamma used mystic lights and sounds to guide him which transformed his life completely.

Once six members group came from Pondicherry to meet Mayamma and one of them, a female was afflicted with some serious health issue. Following the doctors' admission that they were powerless to treat her terminal illness, some of Mayamma's followers advised them to travel to Salem to see Mayamma, hence, they came over there. When they met Mayamma, she blessed each one of them by stroking their heads while paying no attention to the sickly woman. The woman started crying uncontrollably burying her face in Mayamma's lap, even as Mayamma remained unmoved. Suddenly, Mayamma yelled incoherently for a few seconds before becoming composed and began to stroke the woman's hair. Everyone remained confused and went away. Within a few days, it was learnt that the woman's illness had completely disappeared.

Khanda Yoga is one of the most challenging forms of yoga, in which the body's various parts are separated, left outside for a while in various locations, and then reassembled as a single body. It is thought that practicing this yoga will help

the body stay free of worldly attachments. It was regularly practiced by Shirdi Sai Baba, who was thought to be an incarnation of Lord Dattathreya. Curiously, few have seen even Mayamma performing Khanda Yoga.

It is stated that in the year 1986 itself Mayamma informed Shri Rajendran that she wanted to take samadhi in a particular location identified by her in Salem; hence, he brought her to Salem. It was a barren land, and both began to stay there in a hut constructed under a tree in an isolated place. Mayamma's devotees used to visit there to take her blessings. The rains had failed completely in Salem ever since Mayamma came and settled there, hence, locals resented her entry in to Salem and planned to drive her off. When Shri Rajendran heard of their anger he became jittery and told Mayamma the mind of the locals; however, she said nothing. Alas, that night rains lashed the city of Salem to the extent that all water beds and reservoirs were filled to full capacity to last until the next rainstorm. The locals who spew venom on Mayamma felt ashamed and sought forgiveness from Mayamma.

Few of Mayamma's followers traveled to Salem to stay with Mayamma after the mother settled there. Mrs. Latha Mangeshkar, a female teacher from Tamil Nadu's Trichy district, was one amongst them. After Mayamma took Samadhi, she allegedly spent the entire night sitting by the side of Mayamma's corpse.

Later she told a reporter that she had to keep wiping Mayamma's body throughout the night to remove

dampness because she had noticed that the corpse was perspiring the whole night. She was able to freely move Mayamma's hands and legs while wiping, as if Mayamma was still alive. It is usual that the parts of the deceased become immobile and stiff after death, but Mayamma's body remained completely flexible till her corpse was kept inside the pit for samadhi. Only Mrs. Latha Mangeshkar was able to see the large flash of light that Mayamma gave her while Mayamma was placed inside the pit before it was closed. On September 2, 1992, Mayamma took Samadhi.

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